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Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: Special economic assistance to individual countries or regions

Assistance for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Liberia

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Introduction

1. After seven years of civil war and internecine fighting a new Government was elected in Liberia on 19 July 1997 through a process which was declared free and fair by the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and other observers from the international community. The restoration of peace to Liberia was achieved with substantial technical and logistical support from ECOWAS, the United Nations and the international community in general.

2. Following the elections and the consultations held with President Charles Taylor and the Security Council, the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in Liberia (UNOL) was established. On 12 December 1997, Mr. Felix Downes-Thomas was appointed as representative of the Secretary-General in Liberia and head of UNOL. His task is to help consolidate the peace and prevent a relapse into conflict and, thereby, to create in Liberia a conducive environment for sustainable development.

3. UNOL's mandate is, *inter alia*, to assist in mobilizing international political support for international assistance to Liberia; to support and facilitate – in collaboration with the Resident Coordinator, and in cooperation with bilateral donors and other institutions – the work of the United Nations country team in developing an integrated approach to the peace-building programmes of the Government of Liberia; to facilitate the provision of technical assistance and support by the United Nations system for reconciliation efforts and the establishment of democratic institutions; to facilitate communications between the Government of Liberia and the United Nations on matters related to peace-building objectives, and to facilitate communications between ECOWAS and the United Nations on matters related to Liberia.

4. Following the inauguration of the President, Charles G. Taylor, on 2 August 1997, several initiatives were undertaken by the Government, led by the National Patriotic Party (NPP) to consolidate the peace through a process of national reconciliation and to embark on the reconstruction of the country. The Government has sought to achieve these goals through the implementation of resettlement and reintegration programmes and by encouraging the full participation of the people in these initiatives. As a first step towards the realization of its objectives, the Government established the National Reconciliation and Reunification Commission. It also moved swiftly to establish the Liberia Commission on Human Rights, in fulfilment of one of President Taylor's inauguration day promises, and a number of national ad hoc commissions with a view to streamlining the public sector. Governance was accorded a special priority in the Government's programme of activities during its first year in office. In this connection, a Commission on Good Governance was also established.

5. The Government, realizing that its objectives could not have been achieved without substantial assistance from donor countries and the international community at large, requested a ministerial meeting of the Special Conference on Liberia to discuss the reconstruction of Liberia and to solicit the support of donors in advance of any formal donors' conference. The meeting was held in New York on 3 October 1997, under the auspices of the United Nations. At that forum, the Government tabled its Agenda for Rebuilding Liberia, which provided the broad outlines of its plan for reconstruction. The plan seeks to:

(a) Revive and reinforce the governance institutions at both the central and local levels;

(b) Ensure sustained peace, national and personal security and civil liberties;

(c) Undertake the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the local services;

(d) Repatriate and resettle about 460,000 refugees;

(e) Resettle the majority of the country's 900,000 internally displaced persons;

(f) Integrate the 20,000 demobilized ex-combatants into civilian society;

(g) Ensure food security;

(h) Resuscitate and expand sources of sustainable livelihood, particularly in the informal and private sectors;

(i) Facilitate the rehabilitation and reconstruction of essential public infrastructure in rural and urban areas.

These objectives constituted, in effect, the essential guidelines for collaboration between the Government and the international community, including, in particular, the United Nations.

6. Accordingly, at the request of the Government and immediately following the New York ministerial meeting, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Bretton Woods institutions as well as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the European Union (EU) undertook a series of joint missions to assess the situation in Liberia. From those missions emerged a draft planning framework for reconstruction and

recovery. The draft was further refined, through consultations with the Government and Liberia's major donors, into a final framework document that distilled and highlighted those critical issues relevant to the reconstruction and recovery process in Liberia. Emphasis was placed on peace-building, consolidation of the democratic process, the resettlement and reintegration of the displaced and the ex-combatants, rehabilitation of social and physical infrastructure and restoration of sound framework for economic management.

7. The process of assessing the situation in Liberia and the designing of a framework for reconstruction and recovery culminated in the production by the Government of a National Reconstruction Programme (NRP). It is worth noting that the Programme is also the result of a broad-based participatory process which, under the leadership of the Government, benefited from the contributions of the United Nations system for operational activities for development in Liberia, USAID, EU, the Bretton Woods institutions, non-governmental organizations and representatives of Liberian civil society, including the private sector. The National Reconstruction Programme was presented to the Donors' Conference which convened in Paris on 7 April 1998 and in which the representative of the Secretary-General in Liberia participated on behalf of the United Nations.

8. At the Conference, pledges and commitments made totalled US$ 229.9 million, constituting 109.3 per cent of the first funding requirements of the first phase of the two-year programme. The second-phase funding requirement is US$ 227.7 million. The next donors' meeting will be a regular Donors' Conference chaired by the World Bank and is tentatively scheduled for December 1998. In the fall of 1998 a multi-donors' mission will be fielded to monitor progress and to assess the emerging needs of the second phase of the reconstruction process. In the meantime, UNDP has provided assistance to the Government, enabling it to analyse the pledges made at the Paris conference, to both general and specific programme areas. That exercise was undertaken, within the context of the National Reconstruction Programme, so as to identify programmatic gaps and financial shortfalls and to determine appropriate corrective and remedial measures. More importantly, it determined the various modes for operationalizing the Programme.

9. Currently, economic activity in Liberia is gaining momentum, owing to a generally improved macroeconomic environment and security situation. The informal sector is now functioning at about 75 per cent of its pre-war level. In the formal sector, the number of newly registered business increased by 56.5 per cent over the period 1996–1997. Rubber and log production have resumed, albeit below the pre-war level. Nevertheless, rubber now accounts for 76.5 per cent of total exports, while logging produces some 19.63 per cent of Liberia's total exports. Maritime revenue is dominant, in that it constitutes about 70 per cent of total revenue. While food security remains a national problem, the production of food commodities has increased. This has reduced the need for food aid which was previously provided to the general population. Food aid is now being provided to only targeted groups comprising the most vulnerable section of society.

10. With regard to foreign trade, the major characteristic is the dramatic increase in the balance-of-trade deficit, from US$ 73 million in 1996 to US$ 187.4 million in 1997. This situation may be attributed to the increased demand for imported commodities by the increasing number of persons returning to Liberia relative to the supply from domestic production. It nevertheless points to external debt as a serious constraint for reconstruction and recovery. As at 31 December 1997, the total outstanding debt was estimated to be US$ 2.388 billion with the multilateral component accounting for about US$ 1.277 billion, or 53.4 per cent.

11. Against the background described above, international assistance to Liberia has sought to contribute towards creating and strengthening the bedrock on which sustainable development could be built. A significant measure of assistance is being directed to activities that should ensure not only respect for human rights but also improvements in the security situation of Liberia. Capacity-building measures, to ensure accountability and transparency in the use of national resources as a necessity for financial propriety, have been the focus of international assistance. By and large, international assistance is being delivered and reshaped to serve as an instrument of reconciliation, reintegration and of general economic progress. Within this context, United Nations assistance to Liberia has taken various forms in various sectors as described below.

II. Good governance

12. As is the case with any other society traumatized by war and civil unrest, the process of reconciliation and reconstruction in Liberia has at times been slow, awkward and faltering. Liberia has yet to restructure its armed forces. The Government has recognized the need for training at all levels of its security apparatus and has welcomed all initiatives in this respect. The role of UNOL has been pivotal. In related areas of priority, there continues to be dire need to provide technical assistance to the various agencies

of the Government and civil society organizations in Liberia. Mindful of these needs, UNDP has sponsored a project to promote good governance which is being executed by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat. The project is expected to contribute substantially to consolidating the democratic process and sensitizing Liberians, both in government and in civil society, to the concept and practice of good governance. It is also expected to strengthen the capacity of organizations of human rights and civil society engaged in the promotion of good governance in Liberia.

III. Human rights

13. The Government of Liberia has committed itself to promoting and protecting human rights. In practical terms, the Government has fulfilled its early promise to establish the Liberia Commission on Human Rights, an independent institution to monitor the human rights situation and to which reports may be made regarding human rights violations, for purposes of redress. However, the process of enacting legislation was flawed and widely criticized by members of civil society. UNOL played a pivotal role in all of the discussions on the establishment of the Commission, both within governmental and civil society forums. Since the establishment of the democratically elected Government of the National Patriotic Party (NPP), the overall human rights situation in Liberia has improved. National human rights organizations have played a pivotal role in monitoring the human rights situation in Liberia. However, there continue to be human rights concerns, especially in the interior, where there have been persistent reports of harassment and intimidation of residents.

14. Of particular concern to several observers of the human rights situation in Liberia has been the modus operandi of members of the country's security forces. UNOL provided training to 110 members of the Liberia National Police, in the area of human rights, over a six-week period commencing in May 1998. UNOL has been concerned about the status of the Government of Liberia with respect to the signing and/or ratification of various international human rights treaties and conventions. It has identified these human rights instruments and has conveyed the information to the Liberian Ministry of Foreign Affairs with a view to stimulating action on the process of signing and/or ratifying them.

IV. Rehabilitation at the community level

15. The restoration of the delivery system for basic social services to and within communities remains one of the priorities of the United Nations family in Liberia. Focus on the community assumes tremendous and cross-cutting importance, especially against the backdrop of the need to resettle and reintegrate some 600,000 returning refugees and over 200,000 internally displaced persons. UNDP and United Nations agencies are engaged in various aspects of the reintegration effort at the community level. The effort includes establishing access to potable water, the provision of agricultural seeds and tools, the restarting of local markets and the erection of appropriate sanitation facilities. Within communities, the United Nations agencies are providing funds for the rehabilitation of schools and clinics.

V. Specific actions taken in response to the Donors' Conference

16. UNDP is providing assistance to the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs in analysing the pledges made in general and in individual programme areas, to identify imbalances with a view to highlighting gaps and to propose corrective actions. UNDP has also initiated plans to provide support in the preparation of programmatic documents to expedite the implementation of programmes and to assist, through advocacy and capacity strengthening, in enabling the Ministry to play an assertive leadership role in the reconstruction process.

VI. Resettlement of internally displaced persons and the repatriation of refugees

17. UNDP has assisted the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs in the coordination of the post-war reconstruction programme of which resettlement and reintegration are key components. It is expected that the Reintegration Steering Committee will be expanded to a full-fledged coordination committee to support, guide and monitor the implementation of the post-war reintegration programme. Under a UNDP project executed by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, assistance has been provided to the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs and has achieved meaningful results. The computer-

based Geographic Information System (GIS) to support and provide information on the progress of the restoration of physical infrastructures in Liberia has been installed in the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs. The information provided by GIS will facilitate the initiation of reconstruction planning and programming. Training and capacity-building activities have been conducted, with 30 national non-governmental organizations participating. Additional training in other areas is planned. Initial institution-building grants have been approved for several national non-governmental organizations to expand their service delivery capacity.

18. The Government has formulated a specific plan for the resettlement of internally displaced persons, targeting the 226,000 persons living in recognized shelters which have been ordered closed by the Government. UNDP is assisting the Liberian Refugee Repatriation and Resettlement Commission (LRRRC) to implement the plan. A task force which includes representatives of UNDP, the World Food Programme (WFP), USAID, EU and LRRRC has been established. Resources have been secured to enable the resettlement of 75,000 persons, most originating from south-western counties, from shelters in Monrovia. Pull factors such as assistance packages of tools and seeds, food, and shelter materials are being assembled and distributed. Transportation is being arranged for the most vulnerable. A sensitization programme has been carried out at the destinations and in the shelters. Over the first five-week period, 5,110 families comprising 29,054 persons have voluntarily relocated from shelters to their communities of origin. In this activity, WFP provided a one-month food ration at the level of the receiving communities. WFP is also funding the development/reclamation and ultimate cultivation of rice on 650 hectares of swamp land for rice cultivation towards the attainment of food self-sufficiency. In addition, WFP distributed one month's supply of food rations to 156,300 spontaneous returnees.

VII. Voluntary repatriation

19. Between May 1997 and May 1998, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) assisted in the voluntary repatriation of close to 38,000 Liberian refugees from Sierra Leone, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Cameroon, Nigeria and Guinea. Of that number, 9,191 persons were assisted in the repatriation exercise with cash grants and returnee packages. Similarly, about 10,500 Liberian returnees, residing close to the borders, were assisted in making the return journey home on foot, with the provision of a returnee package consisting of non-food items and two months' supply of food rations. Only the infirm, the vulnerable and those living long distances away from their final destinations were provided with transportation. Air and sea transport were provided for some of the most vulnerable groups residing in Sierra Leone, Ghana, Cameroon, and Nigeria.

20. The reopening of the Guinean border with Liberia on 20 March 1998 permitted the organization of repatriation convoys by UNHCR. The repatriation movement continues, and a large number is expected to repatriate spontaneously. There are, however, severe resource constraints on UNHCR's capability to continue providing transportation for Liberian refugees who wish to return home. There still remain 73,383 Liberian refugees in the five main countries of asylum (Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone) who have registered for voluntary repatriation and who await UNHCR assistance.

21. In addition to organized repatriation, there have been massive spontaneous refugee returns to Liberia from both Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire. Because of the nature of these movements, no reliable statistical data are available. However, according to repatriation monitors from the Liberian Refugee Repatriation and Resettlement Commission (LRRRC), placed along main entry points, nearly 100,000 Liberians are estimated to have repatriated spontaneously.

VIII. Reintegration

22. UNHCR assistance for the reintegration of Liberian returnees is community based. It targets basic infrastructure and public facilities in returnee communities. The reintegration project is implemented through an approach that provides rehabilitation for basic infrastructure and revitalization of services in the sectors of health, education, water, sanitation, agriculture and road repair. UNHCR reintegration projects target areas of major return, which include the border counties of Lofa, Bong, Nimba, Maryland, and Grand Gedeh.

23. Between September 1997 and April 1998, a total of 38 reintegration projects have been implemented in Lofa, Maryland, and Grand Gedeh counties, mainly in the health, education, water and agriculture sectors. Since December 1997, revitalization of primary health care services has commenced in seven clinics in Lofa county and in five clinics in Maryland county. However, a significant number of the proposed reintegration projects could not be

implemented, due to budget cuts imposed by a severe funding shortfall.

IX. Community revival and restoration

24. Through a project executed by the United Nations Office for Project Services, UNDP is contributing support to the revival of communities, starting with the restoration of basic social service delivery (education, health, water, sanitation, local access) and including the restart of productive activities (primarily farming).

25. Specific activities being funded by UNDP with other United Nations agencies under the community revival and restoration section of the reintegration programme include safe drinking water, provision of agricultural seeds and tools, restarting of local markets, and sanitation facilities. The project is also funding the rehabilitation of schools and clinics, including the provision of critical equipment, materials and supplies. In those areas where important access routes are impeded, road repairs and upgrading are being supported. Since June 1997, programme operational centres/field offices have been established and staff deployed to Lofa (two offices), Bong, Margibi, and Grand Bassa counties. Similar deployment is scheduled for Bomi and Rivercess shortly. Currently 109 resettlement and reintegration projects are at various stages of completion, and an additional 225 proposals are under consideration. Furthermore, in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health, 90 educational and 45 major and minor health facilities will be rehabilitated over the next quarter.

26. A cooperation agreement has been reached with the UNHCR for a joint approach in Lofa and Bong counties for the rehabilitation of education and health facilities and for water and sanitation projects. Those two counties are areas of high return for refugees and internally displaced persons.

27. WFP's support to the project is the provision of food commodities such as hot, balanced meals for the pupils and staff members of educational institutions. Coming out of a seven-year civil war during which it was unable to meet teachers' salaries, the Government welcomes the food-for-work incentives provided by WFP as a positive contribution to an otherwise difficult situation. With a Dutch Quality Improvement Grant, recently received, WFP plans to assist in strengthening the capacity of the School Feeding Section of the Ministry of Education. A project is being developed for this purpose.

28. WFP is supporting this activity largely through food-for-work to non-technical workers. In some instances, however (i.e., Bong and the south-eastern part of Liberia), WFP has provided material and monetary support for infrastructure repairs. In collaboration with the Government and Swiss Disaster Relief, WFP will undertake the reconditioning of the highway from Gbarnga to Voinjama. When completed, it is expected to be an all-weather road which will ensure access to all parts of the country, enabling and enhancing trade, commerce and the movement of people.

29. With funding from the Government of Sweden and UNDP, efforts of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in support of community revival and restoration concentrated on the distribution of vegetable seeds and tools, reflecting the desires of the beneficiary farmers. Needs assessments were conducted. Distribution plans were developed, and resources at the disposal of other donors were coordinated, through the Seeds and Tools Committee, comprising the Ministry of Agriculture, FAO, EU, USAID, and key non-governmental organizations. A number of international non-governmental organizations participated and contributed as implementing partners in the distribution of the farm inputs. At the same time, FAO also involved a large number of local non-governmental organizations as implementing partners, with a view to facilitating their gaining national capacity. This was the first time in the recent past when farmers received vegetable seeds in large quantity from donors. Although some pest problems were encountered, the results were, in general, favourable. More vegetables became available in markets, increased income was generated by farmers and farming communities, and reintegration was greatly facilitated. An impact assessment is to be conducted in due course. Rice seeds were distributed to 36,000 farmers for the main planting season (April/May) of 1998. The Government of Sweden has approved phase II of the operations so that similar assistance to vulnerable farmers may continue for the 1998/99 planting season.

30. Under the project "Rehabilitation and apprenticeship training of rural blacksmiths in Liberia", relief items were distributed to rural blacksmiths during the period of January to May 1998, for the rehabilitation of local capacity. Prior to the distribution of the relief items, 40 master blacksmiths from 40 villages in seven counties participated in workshops on the training of trainers. The shop of each of the 40 master blacksmiths was eventually rehabilitated with a complete set of tools, enabling them to commence fabrication of agricultural tools and other village household items. On average, five apprentices were attached to each master blacksmith and, after adequate training, the apprentices will

be expected to be able to open their own workshops. The operations were funded by FAO's Technical Cooperation Programme and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat. FAO provided fishing gear (nets, hooks, twine, and other materials) to 2,454 persons involved in fishing in nine countries and trained 63 master fishermen in improved techniques for fishing, processing and marketing. Fifty-eight per cent of the beneficiaries were women.

X. Health

31. WHO and UNICEF have been actively supporting health programmes intended to mitigate the health problems in the community and specifically to facilitate community revival and restoration. One of the major activities was the strengthening of the National AIDS Control Programme, which also benefited from support from UNDP and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The focus was on strengthening institutional capacity for broad and cross-sectional action, to address the multidimensional aspects of HIV/AIDS with a view to developing strategies to assist individuals, families and communities supporting HIV/AIDS-affected people. This approach also pays special attention to the psycho-social and economic consequences of HIV/AIDS, for both children and families and society at large. The project also aims at networking with other projects, particularly those providing communities with sustainable livelihoods and entrepreneurial training.

32. In other areas of health, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, UNICEF, the World Health Organization (WHO) and Médecins du monde developed a plan of action to train health and development related workers at the three levels of health delivery system. The action was geared towards revitalizing public health clinics in Grand Bassa county. Support for the health sector further included the donation by WHO of a bus to the A. M. Dogliotti College of Medicine and School of Pharmacy, the printing of reproductive health policy documents for Liberia, and the training of 30 community animators to set up surveillance programmes for vitamin, iodine and iron deficiency. A joint UNICEF/WHO nationwide micro nutrient survey is planned for the second half of 1998. A technical cooperation programme document for the health sector has also been prepared through the collaboration of the Ministry of Health, WHO and UNDP. Food for vulnerable groups is also being provided by WFP for therapeutic purposes and as a safety net. This assistance is being planned to contribute to maternity and child health projects.

33. UNICEF support in the area of health also includes the rehabilitation of 75 clinics; in collaboration with UNDP and the United Nations Office for Project Services, 18 other clinics in five district hospitals are in the process of rehabilitation. UNICEF has also supported the provision of drugs and vaccines to the National Drug Service and the rehabilitation of nine county health teams, and has contributed to the national immunization programme. UNICEF plans, in collaboration with WHO, to undertake a polio eradication programme.

XI. Primary education

34. In its efforts to assist the Ministry of Education in the revitalization of basic primary education in Liberia, UNICEF's support has been in the following programme areas:

(a) Provision of educational supplies and equipment. About 1,836 schools, with an estimated population of 280,000 students, were served with school supplies in nine counties in 1997. In 1998, 500 public primary schools with an additional 100,000 students are to be provided with essential school supplies (notebooks, pencils, chalk, papers, etc.);

(b) In-service teacher training. In support of the Ministry of Education, UNICEF funded short-term training of 3,200 teachers at district and county levels in rural Liberia. In collaboration with UNHCR, UNICEF will, in 1998, support the Ministry of Education in training 750 primary-school teachers for an eight-week period at three institutions around the country;

(c) Provision of primary school textbooks. Primary school textbooks in four core areas (mathematics, science, language arts and social studies) have been revised and printed (about 1.2 million copies) and are being distributed to all primary schools at minimal cost through a local non-governmental organization and the Ministry of Education;

(d) Accelerated learning programme. This programme will assist over-age children who have missed a few years of primary-school education to cover a normal grade's work in from three to four months in order to move through two or three grade levels in a one-year period;

(e) Peace education/conflict resolution. Training workshops are conducted for teachers in conflict awareness, and intensive training sessions are conducted for junior-high-school and senior-high-school students in peer mediation, known as Palava management. This project is

being implemented for about 300 teachers and 1,080 students by a local non-governmental organization;

(f) Curriculum material centres. During the pre-war era, there existed curriculum material centres (reproduction centres) in the 13 counties. UNICEF is assisting the Ministry of Education to revive the centres which are attached to each county education office. Three centres have been renovated and equipped; six others are to be revived during 1998. UNOL has also been assisting the Ministry of Education in a programme initiated by the Carter Center, to put in place a national strategy for human rights education within the school system.

XII. Skills development/sustainable livelihood

35. With UNDP funding, the International Labour Organization (ILO) is engaged in the implementation of a project designed to develop skills and ultimately provide employment opportunities to demobilized combatants and other persons affected by conflict. The project is building national capacity for planning and designing short-cycle skills training programmes. A secondary effort is being made to enhance and facilitate the development of small enterprises, by including in the curricula simple finance management and resource organization courses with a built-in bias towards self-employment.

36. To date, 27 community-based organizations have been supported in providing skills training for 4,896 persons. Another 2,000 are currently undergoing training. Support has also been provided for the restarting of training activities at the Booker T. Washington Institute, which was the largest institution for the training of mid-level technicians in the country prior to the conflict. To support the expansion of activities into rural formal and non-formal skill areas in counties with relatively greater population concentrations, such as Lofa, Bong and Nimba, and into the south-east, a rural satellite station has been established in Gbarnga, Bong County. UNICEF is conducting a similar programme which addresses the special needs of demobilized child combatants. Twelve training centres have been established for one-year cycles for the benefit of 14-18-year-old children. Three thousand six hundred children have been trained in various trades, while 1,200 others are currently in training. In collaboration with UNDP and the United Nations Office for Project Services, carpenters trained under the programme will provide 6,000 school benches to about 100 newly rehabilitated schools.

XIII. Food security

37. FAO has supported Liberia in its pledge to follow the World Food Summit Plan of Action. In support of this pledge and in order to assist the country to achieve greater and sustainable food security, FAO began assisting the Ministry of Agriculture in formulating the Special Programme for Food Security (SPFS). With funding from its regular budget, FAO facilitated the preparatory work in data collection and the formulation of the draft project document. The work included assessments and consultation with farmers and community populations involved in food security activities. The project document is expected to be finalized with UNDP's supplementary funding. Pilot-phase projects at three sites are expected to become operational by the end of this year. They are aimed at boosting food production in the most cost-effective, integrated, and sustainable manner, contributing to the rehabilitation process in agriculture and in the restoration of food security.

XIV. Capacity-building

38. In March 1998, with UNDP financial support, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) completed a study to update the costs of two major civil airports in the country – Roberts International and James Spriggs Payne airports. Under the same project, ICAO presented its recommendations on legal and financial issues related to the proposal to create an autonomous civil aviation body. The Government subsequently decided to create such an institution to facilitate the operation of the air transport activities.

39. Under a UNDP project, "Transfer of knowledge through expatriate nationals" (TOKTEN), 16 Liberian professionals have been fielded to various institutions, including the University of Liberia and the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Memorial Hospital. About 50 Liberians are to be offered short-term training programmes abroad with UNDP support. Also, with UNDP support, UNESCO has organized the training of 3,000 teachers in curriculum development. Under the same project, the Ministry of Education has developed a strategy to decentralize the educational services in an effective manner.

40. In 1998, FAO provided Liberia with assistance to rebuild and enhance its capacity to prevent epidemics of certain animal diseases. In May, FAO sent a senior animal officer to attend the regional workshop on regional cooperation for the control of trypanosomiasis, held at

Banjul, Gambia. FAO launched a regional emergency project, including Liberia, for enhancing the preventive capacity to combat African swine fever in West Africa and made it possible for two technical officers to attend a technical consultative meeting on the subject, held at Lomé, Togo, in June 1998. FAO also facilitated Liberia's rejoining, after 10 years' absence, the African Forestry and Wildlife Commission, by sending a senior technical official of the Forestry Development Authority to the Commission's eleventh session and to the twelfth session of the Working Party on Management of Wildlife and National Parks, held at Dakar, Senegal, in April 1998.

41. In February, FAO facilitated the attendance of two technical fisheries officers at a regional workshop on fish technology and quality assurance, held at Walvis Bay, Namibia. FAO also sent a technical fisheries officer to the Workshop on the Adaptation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries in West Africa, held in Cotonou, Benin. In addition, FAO conducted a two-week training workshop for officials of the Fisheries Bureau in order to enable them to resume extension and other technical services to the fishing communities in Liberia. These workshops were sponsored by the Government of Denmark through an FAO regional project "Programme for integrated development of artisanal fisheries in West Africa".

42. The Tubman National Institute of Medical Arts, which is supported by WHO under its Programme for the Development of Human Resources for Health, graduated 81 middle-level health care workers in the following disciplines: nursing, midwifery, environmental health, and physician's assistant.

43. In collaboration with UNFPA, in February 1998, two staff members of WHO and the Ministry of Education participated in a study tour in Uganda and Ethiopia on producing information, education and communication (IEC) material in population and family life education. Technical support, coordinated by WHO, was provided 21 health workers at the Mother Pattern College of Health Science.

44. In close consultation with the Ministry of Health, WHO conducted two workshops in January to train 48 peripheral health workers from Bong and Lofa counties in disease surveillance and epidemiology. The training focused on epidemiological surveillance methods, the case definition of epidemic-prone diseases, the management of epidemic-prone diseases, and formative supervision.

45. In the area of capacity-building, UNOL provided training to 110 members of the Liberia National Police in human rights, as mentioned above. UNOL has also actively supported the programmes of the National Human Rights Center of Liberia, to enhance the capacity of local organizations to monitor effectively the human rights situation throughout the country. Similarly, UNOL has sought the support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva for the newly established Liberia Commission on Human Rights.

XV. Gender

46. The UNDP country office, in partnership with UNHCR, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the African Development Bank, undertook a programming exercise in February/March 1998. Translation and publication of the Beijing Platform for Action into commonly spoken vernacular has begun with UNIFEM assistance and is ongoing.

47. Some 500 members of civil groups have been linked with a local consortium of non-governmental organizations, for technical advice on formalizing their structures and acquiring direct support from the United Nations and other donor agencies. The National Women's Commission of Liberia and the Banjor Women's Fishing Association are currently benefiting from such inter-agency networking through FAO.

48. In other areas of gender-related capacity-building, UNDP has been facilitating the efforts of the Government and United Nations agencies to establish gender focal points with a view to giving more prominence to gender mainstreaming and coordination in their programmes in Liberia. The gender mainstreaming is expected to support the creation of a solid gender network of partnership between the Government and the United Nations. All United Nations agencies operating in Liberia have established and designated a gender focal point in their operations.

49. Creating a data bank on women's work is also being pursued with the Government. The main objective is to assess the capacity for partnership in project implementation and monitor the impact of economic and social policies on women. UNDP and UNOL are also assisting the Government in pursuing the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. That step will be followed by the formulation of a national plan of action.